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created in the belly which matches millet and beans. These are the foods that Kyalo said are important.

Mwalimo: When a woman is pregnant she fears to pass people who are at work planting, smithing, milking, or brewing beer, because they say the child in the belly, the weight (*mbasito*), is like a witch, it will damage food like witchcraft; beer is spoiled and tastes nasty, food does not grow, the smith's iron is not easily worked, the milk is not good. If a pregnant woman comes across her fellows planting she stops them for a few minutes while she passes. If they are brewing they give her a little beer to taste.

Amanuensis: As for avoiding food, a woman avoids especially when she has been pregnant for one or two months. It is said that if she passes through the gardens, perhaps where people are planting, or where they have already planted but the seed has not yet sprouted, the child in the belly tries to snatch the millet, and it meets the medicine (for people plant millet with a medicine, saying: 'May my millet not rot in the ground'), then perhaps the mother has a miscarriage. If the child in her belly has sprouted then she does not fear much . . . and if the millet has sprouted she does not fear much, but when it has not yet sprouted then the medicine is fierce.

Besides the symbol of the fields with 'jaws agape' snatching food, there is a symbol of 'seed within' fighting 'seed without'. Mwalimbo was careful to point out that this interpretation was a personal one, assented to, but not volunteered, by others he consulted; however, it was later confirmed by Kasisile.

Mwalimo: A pregnant woman should avoid those planting beans and millet, or straining ointment, sunning millet, or brewing beer, because there is kinship (*ubukomo*) between the child in her belly and food, we call all of them seed (*mbeju*). The seed in her belly and that outside fight; that within is fierce and overcomes that outside. To help them plant is to make friends; to knot a leaf is to bind the anger of the human seed. All those with whom I have discussed the matter agreed that this is so, but they have agreed when I began to explain it to them; none of them understand the other symbols. I discussed it with about eleven men.

Kasisile: The taboo against a pregnant woman passing millet and other seed spread out to dry is because these seeds fight with the child inside. It is seed, it defeats them; it is seed, it is water, it is blood. To bind a leaf is to bind that blood within, that it may not kill the seeds out drying. If someone else's food is being planted and a pregnant woman approaches, and does not bind a leaf and throw it in the grain basket, then the seed is insufficient to plant.

A general principle of Nyakyusa thought is the opposition of

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like activities; things which are felt to be alike are often felt to be antagonistic. We have shown that certain of the pregnancy taboos are interpreted in terms of the opposition between seed in plants and seed in the womb, and between pumpkins in the field and pumpkins in the vagina, and we have touched on the opposition between procreation and war. Sexual intercourse, 'the war of the mats', is directly compared with war; the two are felt to be alike and therefore incompatible. Association with a menstruating or parturient woman is felt to be weakening to a warrior; continence of a warrior before battle is enjoined—"men feared to die quickly if they slept with their wives just before war." Moreover, a menstruating wife never touches her husband's weapons lest they be weakened.

Hunting is classed with war and the same taboos apply. Added to them is the notion that, since a pregnant woman is often angry, the animals her husband hunts will be angry also, and he is in much greater danger than an ordinary hunter.

ANONYMOUS: If you go into the bush and you have left your wife heavy, at home, if you meet a lion it will not run off, but will injure you, maul you. And if you are many, a leopard or a lion will attack you, the heavy one, not the others.

QUESTION: Why?

ANONYMOUS: It is as if there was much anger. And we've noticed something else, if a lion attacks cattle it always attacks a cow in calf. And another thing. If a woman is heavy she is very bad-tempered (*okali*), it's like a passion. Perhaps the woman is bad-tempered or perhaps good, and you, the husband, are bad-tempered. Pregnancy shows in many ways. . . .

A pregnant woman has a great fire in her body, she sweats a lot and is passionate (*nelyaja*), she is fierce (*okali*). That fire is strong; we all flee from the woman, we all dislike her. And when pregnancy begins the animals in the bush wish to kill you, the husband. That fierceness [the fire] makes them hate you; you are like a twin. A first-born child is very fierce (*okali*), so a woman is very passionate and sweats a great deal.

His wife's pregnancy puts a man in danger from wild animals, and so does a quarrel with her, quite apart from the pregnancy which tends to produce such quarrels. Mwainumo said: 'If I go hunting after quarrelling with my wife it is very dangerous, I might be killed by a wild animal.'

Besides the idea that animals will attack the husband of a preg-

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east woman there is a notion that they will flee from him, and therefore he will be hopelessly unsuccessful in hunting. Isaiah, who persisted in hunting while his wife was pregnant and rarely brought in anything, was the laughing-stock of his neighbours. Lyandilicha, the woman doctor, explained: 'The animals flee because the man smells. He smells because his wife is pregnant.'

Procreation and smithing are also felt to be in opposition because they are felt to be alike. A pregnant woman usually avoids a forge altogether, but she sister-in-law, and her husband, if he approaches one, remains silent until he has picked up a piece of charcoal, spat on it, and thrown it into the fire. If he neglects to do so, the iron does not coalesce. Kanisio explained the taboo very clearly:

> If a woman is pregnant she and her husband both fear to go near a forge lest either the iron or the foetus is spoiled. The foetus is spoiled only because medicines are used on the forge; that is to say, the medicine of the forge spoils the iron in the belly of a woman, and she has a miscarriage. But if there is no medicine then the iron is spoiled; it is difficult to work until the smith has sought a doctor to treat it with medicine; then the iron is all right again.

Kanisio speaks of 'the iron in the belly of the woman' and the details of this symbolism are instructive. Angombwike said:

> When a smith forges a spear he does not sleep with his wives[1] because, we say, when a woman conceives the fire blazes within her to forge a person, and the woman's fire and the smith's fire fight. When a smith comes with the fire of his smithy on his body and lies with a woman, the woman has a miscarriage.
>
> The iron of a woman is that within which receives the seed [i.e. the womb]. And we ordinary people who are not smiths, we fear the smith's fire. We do not fear to injure a woman, no, but we fear *ifyondolo*, the disease of the forge, in children. If a man sits talking with a smith at his forge and catches hold of the iron being forged there, if his wife at home bears a child, the child will cough: 'He, he.' It's like the cough of capitals, but we call it 'the forge'. Then people say: 'The forge! Indeed, you, the father, must have sat with a smith at the forge.' Then the father thinks, and he remembers, and takes the child to that smith with whom he sat, and the smith lets his bellows play on the child's body

[1] All informants were agreed that a forge is dangerous to a pregnant woman or her husband, but a smith consulted denied that he observed any sex taboos himself. 'The fire is mine.' 'But,' he said, 'if my wife is pregnant or has given birth to twins, when I go to someone else's forge I myself, with the wisdom of a smith, spit on a piece of charcoal and throw it in the fire.'

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and that cures him. So, when a man comes to a smith's forge for the first time, he always takes a piece of charcoal from the fire and spits on it and throws it into the fire. This means: 'I have come to your forge, smith, may this fire not come on my body.'

And sometimes the smith's iron does not glow and sparkle well. Then he is angry, saying: 'Heavy ones are present. Some of you have pregnant wives, you are spoiling my fire.' We all pick up pieces of charcoal and spit on them and throw them into the fire again. Then the fire blazes up well and the iron glows and sparks.

Mwaninguta, the village headman, confirmed this:

When my wife is pregnant I fear the smithy. I spit on a piece of charcoal. Until she gives birth I fear, but when we just play together on the mat, and she has not yet conceived, I do not fear. . . . Only when it is seen that the 'trust' is there do I fear.

QUESTION: The iron?

MWANINGUTA: It's the blood of the man. The man is the smith. He forges iron there with the woman. The woman is the bellows. The smithing flourishes because of the sweat. Sometimes a woman conceives if I have lain with her two or three times—if Kyala gives us a child—but some delay, and I sleep with them a whole month.

QUESTION: The woman is a bellows?

MWANINGUTA: Yes, because when she is having intercourse she gasps: 'He, he, he!'

QUESTION: And the man?

MWANINGUTA: Yes, but where do we find the fire? In the body of the woman! It's a great fire. Hence we say the bellows is the woman. It's smithing. Women are the anvil. Is there not fire in their bodies? Therefore I hammer there.

The primary taboo is on the pregnant woman approaching the smithy but she injure it, but it is also thought that, like grain and cattle, it may be treated with strong medicines which will cause her to miscarry if she breaks the taboo. Hence the Nyakyusa dictum: 'She who has a miscarriage is she who is proud (*asosinge*).'

The conception that like things are antagonistic, and that the sexual activities of different couples must not be mixed, is clearly shown in the taboos relating to fire and the calabash cup used for water. An elderly councillor of Ngonde, himself a Christian, explained it:

It is taboo for married people to blow up the fire in someone else's house, or to drink from the calabash cup; if they do they will bring a

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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coughing disease to the owners of the house. . . . Pagans used to fear to let those who are sleeping together touch the hearth-bricks or blow up the fire in their house for, if they do so, then the owners of the house, both man and woman, fall sick coughing. They say it is the disease of fires (*upute*). . . . But when a woman has borne a child and is suckling it, and her husband is not with her, then it is not taboo.

Making fire by friction and, in more general terms, fire, are symbols of sexual intercourse, and 'the fire of the body and the fire of the house fight'. Drinking from a calabash cup is perhaps also a symbol of intercourse—the shape of the cup suggests it—but there is no direct evidence of such an association.

The taboo on mixing the sex activities of different couples is pushed to the point that women avoid for a day the milk of a cow that has been with the bull. 'They say: "We will harm the cow. It will abort." They compare it with themselves as women.'

Two last pregnancy taboos may be noted which turn, not on the feeling that like things are antagonistic, but that like produces like. Things felt to be alike are treated as causally related. We quote Mwambupuna, the village headman:

> Women fear to stand in a doorway when they are pregnant. They say: 'How should the child stand in the doorway? It will refuse to come out.' Because if birth is delayed, it is as if the child refused to come out of the house. That is the symbol. And I, the husband, feared also [to stand in a doorway]. Now we men do not fear; it is finished; but women still fear.
>
> And another thing, when a woman was pregnant we feared to sit close together, I, the husband, and my child. It was taboo. And for my wife and another woman to sit close together was taboo. It was said that she would bear twins, because we had sat together. Now we men do not fear, but women still do.

(*b*) *The confinement*

A first confinement, like first menstruation, is the occasion for elaborate ritual, and though at later confinements (as at later menstrual periods) certain taboos must be observed, they are less numerous and less strictly enforced than those connected with the birth of the first child, *umuuna gwa bunaga*.

A first child should be born at the husband's mother's house, 'and if the first child is a girl they will tell her to come again for the second, saying: "Come that we may treat our husband [i.e. grandson]." ' The woman lies, during labour, on a heap of leaves

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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CHAPTER XIX

Omens & Portents

TO us the universe is continually offering the gift of knowledge. The earth and the starry heavens, all that goes on in the human mind, and all men's actions, are subjects of inquiry. But our gift has to be received with toil of heart and brain, for it is granted only to men of mental vigour.

To the Konde, on the other hand, what the universe offers is not so much knowledge as foreknowledge; information rather than education. Prescience, perhaps because the Konde is so distrustful of his own unaided powers, is more to him than the heaped-up lore of the centuries. Everything is in the hands of unseen powers, and it is important for weak men to know beforehand what is the attitude of these powers to any undertaking he may have in mind.

Nature is not, to the African, a fixed system of laws that cannot be interfered with; men can and do interfere with it; stop the rain, injure the crops, make serpents, call up lions and leopards, and many other things. Now it might almost *a priori* be asserted that such a system will not stop at being controllable: it will also be predictive, it will give signs and tokens

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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• 772 of what is coming. But these signs and tokens are not the act of an impersonal universe; they are the act of God, a revelation of His care for men.

781 In Konde omens and portents the dramatic element is slight. I can retail nothing to equal in creepiness the cry of the Irish banshee, or Highland dogs howling at an invisible funeral, or the family ghost clanking its chain in an old English mansion. But a Konde dog howls at night, and sudden silence falls upon the previously laughing and chatting company sitting around the fire, or out in the cool moonlight. Who is going to die? And when? And of what sickness? Or a branch creaks in the forest as one is passing through it at night; and the belated traveller hastens his steps without looking backward, for that way lies death. The bold man who passes the grave of a chief at night, and hears his name called, takes to his heels, eyes front for his very life, for the backward look is death, though to the closed eye there is little danger that cannot be averted.

Omens are offered by nature; they come spontaneously, so far as men are concerned. There are cases in which the omens are consulted, or taken, but generally the information is given by events, rather than discovered by experiment, as with the ancient Roman augurs. And although some men know more about them than others, there are no specialists to whom a fee has to be paid for the interpretation of the omen.

The rough classification which is here attempted, makes no pretence of being exhaustive. Life is full

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1935) 1959
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CHAPTER XI

NYAKYUSA COSMOLOGY

772 We can now piece together, from myth and ritual, the traditional Nyakyusa view of their universe. They have no elaborated system of ideas and the synthesis which follows is more systematic than any uneducated Nyakyusa would formulate.

773 The origin of men was a 'dark house', located high on the Livingstone plateau, and from here the Nyakyusa themselves, and people familiar to them, are thought to have sprung, but there is a hint of the first of the heroes having come 'from the north', and there is also the contradictory notion that the heroes were creators. 'It was Kyala who made us in the beginning with iron ore'; 'Kyala is the smith who forges us'; 'Mbasi is the smith who forges us'; [774] 'Lwembe made Mumba out of clay to be the father of commoners'. But all are agreed that Lwembe (or Mbasi) was the ancestor of the chiefs and no clear distinction is made between creator and progenitor.

Crops and animals and fire were distributed by the heroes. Of their first creation or invention there is no tale for, though Lwembe created animals, he was already a herd-boy when he did so. Moreover, the 'owners of the soil' in the Nyakyusa valley had some crops before Lwembe came bringing them others, together with cattle and fire; but which were the indigenous crops of the valley and which the new is not discussed. If contradictions between the various myths are pointed out they are explained, like divergences in ritual, in terms of differing origin: 'It is the Lambya people to the west who say that cattle came out of an anthill, and the Nyakyusa proper who say they were brought by Lwembe', and so on. Differentiation is epitomized and accounted for by the separation of lineages.

[775] The heroes had a creative force in their own persons, which is inherited by their descendants, the divine kings, and, in a lesser degree, the chiefs; as in Egypt 'the King's potency is felt in the very body and person of each of his subjects'.[1] That potency is partly innate in the royal line, but it is nourished by the use of medicines of which the greatest are reserved to rulers. Vigour is

[1] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 60.

9: Wilson, M. S (1934-1955) 1959
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[77] [among some other peoples with a corresponding ritual], but the young men seize cattle belonging to the older generation, thus asserting their authority. The opposition of generations is taken for granted and given expression in constitutional form: the ritual is a celebration not of 'rebellion' but of growth. For all their reluctance to hand over power the fathers 'rejoice and are glad because their sons have grown up'. Change in the structure of society after the evolution of the heroic age, is not celebrated, and is scarcely admitted, but the process of growth, of death and procreation, is expressed in every ritual. Indeed, the ritual cycle is like a fugue with the theme of death and rebirth constantly recurring.

[71] The pagan universe is just and orderly. There is a nemesis
● [72] attached to spilling blood or binding a man with ropes. The anger
[82] *of men*,[1] or of the shades who are roused by *mulī*, is what brings most misfortune, and often, the Nyakyusa think, such anger is justified. Even medicines may be selective, injuring only the guilty. The good man who celebrates the proper rituals, fulfils his kinship obligations, and keeps on good terms with his neighbours, is protected, while the evil-doer falls ill. But some evil men, witches and sorcerers, attack the innocent out of jealousy and spite. Evil to the Nyakyusa, lies primarily within men: it is 'anger in the heart' which materialises as pythons that throttle others.
[578] Because they are aware of angry impulses in themselves the Nyakyusa find it difficult to believe that any society without witchcraft can exist; to say that there is no *ubulozi* is like suggesting that there is no ill will or anger in a community. And since anger brings misfortune there is an obligation on those whose anger might have caused sickness or ill luck to express goodwill by spitting or blowing out water, and saying, 'May the patient recover' or 'I am without anger'. Among commoners the man required to show goodwill is usually a senior relative, rather than a suspected witch (as among the Azande). But a neighbour or
[574] friend who might be a witch or sorcerer should also express goodwill when he visits the sick, and fellow hunters who have ill luck may stop to declare their goodwill to one another, as we have seen. If a chief or priest-chief is sick the village headmen and priests must wish him well and confess any anger they have felt towards
[118] him. The blowing out of water is a symbol of confession, 'bringing

[1] For a full account of the belief in witchcraft and the 'wrath of men', cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 91-101, 198-201.

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out all the anger that is within', 'admitting that I have done wrong', begging pardon (*ukupelepa*) and *also a symbol of omission and as of driving off the shades* (*vide supra*, pp. 104, 108-110; 139). Good health depends upon good social relationships, and of one who is ailing it is commonly said: 'It seems as if they (unspecified) had hated her.' Further, the proper working of the natural order is held to depend upon the proper working of the social order. Drought, or 'cold', or pestilence falls on a chiefdom if there is quarrelling between chief and priests, and the anger of the Lwembe with his 'sons' will shrivel the crops of Selya. The heroes, the shades, many of the men of power (*abamanga*), and many medicines help to maintain an orderly universe; only the witches and sorcerers work against it. In short, order and right living are an integral part of Nyakyusa religion as they are of Christianity.

The ultimate good is the power of fertility, of generation, which lies in the heroes and shades; the punishment for evil-doing is ill-health of body or mind and sterility. And towards the heroes and shades, who are both life-givers and avengers, the attitude of men is clearly ambivalent: the shades are driven away—'let them warm themselves over there in the long grass', men say when they throw out the ashes (*vide supra*, pp. 109-11) but they bring them home again to 'warm themselves by the hearth'.

In analysing the rituals of the Nyakyusa, I have been driven to the conclusion that they are, in fact, dogged by a sense of guilt,[1] for this is the only hypothesis on which the linking of misfortune and sin, the preoccupation with 'filth', and the recurring acts of purification can be explained. One of the sources of this sense of guilt is, I suggest, *overcome of anger within*, for it is believed that such anger injures others. An act of confession is essential to many rituals, and what must be confessed are anger, hard thoughts, ill will against others. The anger is acknowledged to come primarily from men—it is the angry parent who rouses the shades to action by muttering over the fire—but the guilt, the filth, is projected on to the shade or the hero. It is when they 'brood on' men that men are contaminated. A shade or a man that is *nyelefu*—good, righteous—is one without a grudge, without anger against anyone, free of witchcraft, and free of sex transgression—'there is no accusation against him'.

[1] I doubted this earlier, cf. 'Nyakyusa Ritual and Symbolism', *American Anthropologist*, v. 56 (1954), pp. 233-6.

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We remarked to a Christian friend, a deacon, that the rains were late. He replied: 'Well, it is not so very unusual. Sometimes rains begin in one part of the country and not in another. Sometimes we do not get heavy rain down here until the end of January.' In short, the more educated Christians are beginning to think in more general terms: they do not as yet define probabilities statistically in terms of rainfall averages, but they are tending in that direction.

And what of the positive answer of Christianity? The supreme assertion, mentioned again and again as the reason for conversion, is: 'There is life' (*abomi bakpi*), and it is life in a world to come rather than 'more abundant life' here and now that is spoken of. The contrast is between heaven above and the shadowy world 'beneath' of pagan thought, or a fearful fiery hell in which most Christians believe and to which, some think, all pagans are condemned. Constantly in sermons by Nyakyusa preachers there was stress on life, resurrection, and on the rewards and punishments of the future life, and this theme recurs again and again in the dreams of Christians.

There is a gulf also between the pagan conception of 'driving off' the shades and the horror felt by 'brooding over' a man thus being madness and death, and the Christian ideal of union with God. Sermons stress the goodness and love of God, characteristics quite foreign to the traditional picture of Kyala.

Something of the quality of Christian thought and feeling may be grasped by an examination of the names taken at baptism—the convert from paganism always chooses a new name for himself and the meaning is more immediately obvious to everyone than it is with modern English Christian names derived, as they mainly are, from languages no longer familiar. Many of the Nyakyusa names express a very direct personal relationship with God, the Redeemer: 'He has looked upon me', 'He has rescued me', 'He has waited hoping for me', 'He has died for me', 'He gives me courage', 'He has changed me', 'He has chosen me out', 'He has comforted me', and a score more of the same type. Some refer to the Gospels: 'Word of Truth', 'The Word has taken hold of me'. A few speak of purification: 'Make me white', 'He has washed me'. Some express that union with God which the pagans so greatly fear: 'We are with him', 'He has come near', 'He has brooded over me', 'Let us approach', and some thanksgiving: 'Let us sing to Him', 'We praise Him', 'We have rejoiced', and some life: 'He is risen',